

For Immediate Release:
May 28, 2008

Contacts:
Catherine Kenny, (408) 975-2561

Receive a free digital thermometer -- and help prevent water pollution

While a mercury fever thermometer may seem like a quaint blast from the past, the reality is that these products can cause problems for the environment. When a glass thermometer breaks in the sink, the mercury from that single broken thermometer can pollute up to 5 million gallons of water.

Residents can exchange their old-fashioned glass mercury fever thermometers for a FREE digital thermometer (one per household) between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. **Saturday, May 31** at Edenvale Branch Library, 101 Branham Lane East, in San José. Exchange your old mercury thermometer for a new one and help protect the Bay from mercury contamination.

“We want to get these old thermometers out of medicine cabinets and eliminate this potential source of pollution,” said Melody Tovar, deputy director of Watershed Protection for the City’s Environmental Services Department. “Everything that flows down the drain or into the City’s storm sewer system can pollute the waters of our local creeks or the south San Francisco Bay.”

Since the City began hosting thermometer exchange events last year, Environmental Services staff has collected more than 1,300 mercury thermometers. Collected thermometers are recycled for use in other products, reducing the demand for new mercury mines.

-more-

Mercury is a potent neurotoxin that bioaccumulates in fish muscle tissue—this means that mercury poses a hazard not only for fish but also for people who consume fish (particularly tuna and bass). Mercury can also have negative impacts on the nervous system, brain, kidneys, liver and immune system in humans and animals.

Thermometer exchange events focus on the potential for glass thermometers to either:

- Break in the sink, which results in the mercury being transported through the sanitary sewer system to a treatment plant, where it cannot be removed before being discharged to San Francisco Bay, or
- Be thrown in the garbage when they break, which results in the mercury going to a sanitary landfill, where it can possibly leach into the groundwater over time.

For more information about San José's Thermometer Exchange events, please visit www.sanjoseca.gov/esd/ or call (408) 277-5786.

###